

Message Text

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S E C R E T USUN NEW YORK 03136

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS NIACT IMMEDIATE TO SECRETARY'S
PARTY FOR SAUNDERS

E.O.11652:GDS
TAGS: MOPS, MARR, XF, LE, SY, US
SUBJECT: SYRIAN UN PERMREP ON THE SITUATION IN
BEIRUT

SUMMARY: SYRIAN PERMREP CHOUFI DISCUSSED THE SITUATION
IN BEIRUT WITH AMBASSADOR LEONARD AUGUST 8, OUTLINING
HIS VIEWS ON THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF A POSSIBLE SOLUTION.
HE STRONGLY URGED THAT THE SECRETARY DISCUSS BEIRUT
PROBLEM DIRECTLY WITH ASSAD IN DAMASCUS. END SUMMARY.

1. WITHDRAWAL OF SYRAIN ARMY FROM BEIRUT.

CHOUFI BELIEVES IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE SYRIAN ARMY TO
WITHDRAW TO NEW POSITIONS OUTSIDE OF BEIRUT AND FUNCTION
AGAIN AS AN ARMY RATHER THAN AS A POLICE FORCE. LEONARD
NOTED REPORTS OF GOL CONCERN THAT SUCH WITHDRAWAL WOULD
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OPEN WAY TO FUL-SCALE FIGHTING BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND
PALESTINIANS IN THE CITY. CHOUFI REPLIED THAT SYRIAN ARM
COULD BE DEPLOYED CLOSE TO PALESTINIAN CAMPS IN SUCH A
WAY AS TO LIMIT THE DANGER OF PALESTINIANS TAKING THE
OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE CHRISTINAS.

2. NEED FOR NEW LEBANESE GOVERNMENT.

ONCE THE SYRIANS PULL BACK, CHOUFI CONTINUED, IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH A NEW LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT, ESSENTIALLY TECHNICAL IN NATURE AND TO LIMITED IN COMPOSITION, CLEARLY WAS NOT ABLE TO MASTER THE SITUATION. THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE BROADLY BASED SO THAT ALL THE MAJOR ELEMENTS AND FACTORS ARE BROUGHT INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A POLITICAL SOLUTION. EITHER AT THE MINISTERIAL OR SUB-CABINET LEVEL IT WOULD HAVE TO INCLUDE SUCH PERSONALITIES AS CHAMOUN, GEMAYEL, JUMBLATT, TUENI AND OTHERS. THE MAIN POINT WAS TO ESTABLISH A POLITICAL ARRANGEMENT WHICH ON THE ONE HAND WOULD ASSURE THE CHRISTIANS THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE DESTROYED BY THE MOSLEMS AND ON THE OTHER HAND ASSURE THE SUNNIS THAT THEY WILL NOT BE DOMINATED BY THE CHRISTIANS.

3. US ROLE.

AFTER COMPLETING THIS BRIEF ANALYSIS, CHOUFI TOLD LEONARD THAT IN HIS VIEW ONLY TWO COUNTRIES COULD PUSH THE PARTIE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION -- THE UNITED STATES AND SAUDI ARABIA. THE SECRETARY COULD PLAY A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE AT THIS JUNCTURE BY DISCUSSING THE SITUATION IN BEIRUT DIRECTLY WITH ASSAD. (HE WARNED OF KHADDAM'S NEGATIVE IMPACT ON ANY PROPOSALS PASSED THROUGH HIM). HE HOPED
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THE US UNDERSTOOD THAT SYRIA'S OBJECTIVES IN LEBANON WERE LIMITED TO THE RESTORATION OF A STABLE AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT AND THAT SYRIA DID NOT ASPIRE TO TAKE OVER LEBANON. AS REGARDS INTER-ARAB POLITICS, SAUDI ARABIAN SUPPORT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR ANY VIABLE SOLUTION. THE SAUDIS SPEAK FOR THE SUNNIS IN LEBANON AND CLEARLY HAVE GREAT INFLUENCE.

4. LEONARD WILL BE DISCUSSING THE BEIRUT SITUATION FURTHER WITH CHOUFI ON AUGUST 9 AND WOULD APPRECIATE ANY COMMENTS OR REACTIONS DEPARTMENT MIGHT WISH TO PASS TO HIM. YOUNG

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